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The Five Rules of First Contact

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They were cute, in their own way: Exposed skin with only a light dusting of hair to cover themselves, no shells, scales, feathers, or carapace of any kind. But they didn't look *naked*, they just weren't built with such accouterments.

Staring down at the little creatures far below, each now pointing and staring up at the ship that had entered their atmosphere in a terrible roar of flaring engines, and with the radiance and brilliance always common when a super-heated object roared into oxygen rich atmospheres, it was easy to forget that they were anything more than trivialities, pets almost. But they supposedly weren't. The data was sparse, but these strange creatures, whose lack of any obvious external defenses resulted in a wide array of 'false-skins' being used to cover themselves, were said to be Humanity, one of the four species classified as "Savage" by his species' databooks. It was a listing he didn't fully understand, upon seeing them, but the pilot decided to grab one of the little humans as a sample, to collect further data to explain this peculiar listing.

He fixed his ship's viewscreen on a particularly nicely-patterned one, a sort of wavy mixture of dark and lighter greens crossing seemingly at random across the creature's false skin, with a thicker layer of false-skin covering its feet. Some long-ignored survival instinct went off in the pilot's brain, saying, "It's camouflage, but the human is in the open. Think about what that means this human's purpose might be!"

Instead of paying attention to that little voice, the pilot pressed the hexagonal button at the lower right of his key-pad, which immediately transferred the selected creature into his holding pen at the back of the ship, and deciding to leave his ship drifting on its own in the air above this human collection, a sort of miniature city of their people, he strode back to the holding pens, to see his prize.

The creature he found was not acting as he'd expected. Or, more accurately, it was reacting exactly like the Human's Classification Listing of "Savage" would lead him to expect. This only reinforced the Pilot's confusion over the seeming paradox that existed between a creature without obvious natural defenses or weapons, and such a listing.

He waited patiently as the creature yelled at him, held in a small room with a sample of the external atmosphere gathered from outside, to ensure the creature's survival. His ship's translators wouldn't be able to break down the creature's language very quickly. He'd need to make the creature speak, even if only briefly, for the machine to sort through the wide samples of Human communications it had intercepted in space, to identify and then apply the proper filters for translation. He had been amazed to hear that the species spoke so many languages, but given how long his computer was taking to determine which language was being used, it must certainly be in excess of a hundred different dialects and speeches, all found in a single relatively small planet.

When the computer signaled that it was now capable of identifying and translating the captured creature's speech, he pressed another button, on the door over the creature's head, and immediately a loud translation of the human's speech filtered through, tone and emotional content perhaps garbled, but included to the computer's best ability.

"YOU UGLY PIECE OF TRASH, LET ME THE HELL OUT! I swear, you get the HELL OUTTA HERE NOW or you're gonna regret it. Ain't you dumbasses seen Independence Day? God-danged slimy fucks, you let me GO. AND STOP STARING, you slimy skinned—" the computer didn't seem to have an accurate translation for the series of expletives that followed, but the pilot understood them well enough nonetheless.

When he spoke back to the human, he did so without the anger, and allowed his computer to translate for him. "I do not understand your meaning, human. I have been sent to assess the accuracy of your species' classification rating, a...a term to classify where your species falls, as compared to the others we have found with intelligence and the capacity of rational thought." The human's response was to quiet down, as the computer relayed this information to him, and then to pick up with his swearing quickly thereafter.

The pilot decided that while interesting colored, this particular human might not have the same intelligence he had been led to expect based on the translations and information intercepted in the human transmissions by his own people. None of those transmissions were quite so...insult-ridden, or expletive filled.

Deciding to put this human down, and select another for conversation, the Pilot headed back to the front of the ship, almost missing the translation that echoed after him as he headed back to the controls, a loudly yelled, "I'm a god-damned soldier, you son of a bitch, that's what you can call me. Us. SOLDIERS, you snot-lookin' piece of—" and then more expletives.

At the front of the ship, he was able to see the viewscreen again. It showed that the swell of people outside had grown, and to his surprise there were now other ships of a sort of very small human variety circling in the air around him. There were two, shaped almost like sideways droplets, rapidly spinning lines on the top and a smaller set of spinning lines at the back. He quickly understood them to be used for some sort of rather primitive transportation, and looking closer saw that each of the two little aircraft were 'pointed' at him, facing his ship, with what his ship at least was able to identify as some sort of fairly simplistic ballistic weaponry aimed in his direction. He wasn't afraid, but this information was filed away with everything else he saw, and processed in his fairly genius mind, telling him that a species that responded to obviously more-advanced life with vitriol and threats was, perhaps, accurately labeled as Savage.

He used the Viewscreen to zoom in closer on one of the creatures inside the little flying transports, and with another button press, he sent the human in his hold back to where he'd been gathered below, startling the gathered crowd, and immediately replaced him with the other human in the Viewscreen's image, who was interestingly *also* dressed in that strange sort of

camouflage colors. This one, however, appeared to have false-skin with a wealth of more ornamentation, and strange rows of various brightly colored lines covering his left chest-piece.

Again, the pilot walked down to the holding cell, leaving the transports outside and the wealth of crowded people below to do as they pleased. He was confident his ship would not be harmed by anything they were capable of, and left it stationed in the air exactly as it was. The pilot was pleased to see that this human was less emotionally reactive, neither yelling nor flailing about threateningly as the last had been. He was also silent, though he must have spoken some form of language, as the ship's computer showed it was ready to translate, meaning either that this human spoke the same language as the last, or had spoken enough for the computer to identify its dialect.

When the Pilot approached, the human stayed still. Its hands, and fore-appendages were held lightly behind its back, and its feet were spread perhaps as wide as its shoulders, seemingly locked in place as the human gazed with no obvious emotional response at the Pilot as it came into sight. And then they waited.

They waited several long minutes in silence, the Pilot waited wondering when the creature was going to speak, and the human, an Air Force First Sergeant named David Wells waiting for the alien creature to speak or act, since he'd discovered quickly after appearing in this strange hold that he was not able to move about, and he was effectively simply suspended in place. He had moved to parade rest thereafter, and was waiting with his best stoic face for the alien's actions, desperately afraid and uncomfortable but doing his level best not to show his confusion, terror, and bewilderment in this position.

Finally, the Pilot spoke. Since he wasn't responding to screams and angry yelling, he went with the little pre-written speech he'd created on his way to the planet he was now hovering over. "Hello, human. I am here to assess the accuracy of your species' classification, in order to ensure my people have an accurate and representative idea of the relative intelligence, attributes, and behavior of the other intelligent beings likely to gain the capacity for interplanetary movement in the near future. You are not going to be harmed, and you will be released when our data has been collected. If your species is found to present a danger, you will not be harmed, but may be required to stay within your own atmosphere under threat of punishment, to ensure my people's safety and security. Please, do not take that as a threat, I am simply ensuring that you understand that your people may or may not be dangerous, but that we are not trying to eliminate you regardless of the threat you believe you may pose to interplanetary diplomacy." He paused, a little annoyed that he hadn't managed to craft a speech that sounded as clear as he wanted. He wasn't threatening...he just felt the human should know the truth, especially after the violent outbursts and aggressive threats thrown about by the first sample he'd gathered.

He continued, "Now, Is there any information you feel that is important for me to understand about your people, before I collect other samples for study? Please note that the room in which you are being held will be able to translate the speech your people use, based on signals your kind have been projecting into space conveying the various languages and dialects of your planet. You may speak freely."

The First Sergeant took this in. He was First Sergeant as a title, meaning he would be reporting all he learned in this experience to his immediate unit commander, but his actual rank was Master Sergeant, and he had never anticipated taking the kind of responsibility he now felt. He was going to be one of the first, perhaps even the truly first human being to speak with an alien from another planet. And that alien had told him that his people were being assessed....assessed for some kind of classification? He summoned his courage, and hoping that whatever the translator was, it wouldn't translate the relatively undignified cracking in his voice, he answered.

"My name is David Wells, rank of Master Sergeant in the United States Air Force, and father of two. Yes, I do have advice, and yes, there is information that I wish you to understand before you consider collecting whatever other 'samples' you think you have a right to. I think you need to know that you are currently parked in sovereign air space. I think you need to know that whether or not you release me, or any others you collect, you are going to be kidnapping US citizens. No, not just US citizens, you will be infringing upon the freedom and security of this species. And as God above is my witness, and by the truth I hold in my heart, I must warn you that you have just given an entire species reason to believe that we are threatened from the stars, and there will never, no matter how advanced you are, or intelligent you may be, or powerful your weaponry, there will never be a species more perfectly designed to study and eliminate threats to its existence than the Human People. So you are going to set me down, now, back in my bird over where you zapped me from, and you are going to apologize to my government. Because what we lack in your apparent technology, we make up for in tenacity, and we will not allow you to continue this assault on human safety without rather *aggressive response*." With his little speech over, he went silent, hoping the creature didn't have a good enough idea of human anatomy and behavior to understand what it meant that his knees were visibly shaking.

The pilot, in fact, did not know that information. He also did not know what to respond to this human with. On two other planets where he had been sent to gather and study intelligent life samples, they had pleaded with him, one even asking if he were some form of divinity. They had begged for technology, for aid, for guidance. But this human, who must surely be a warrior (the pilot was now putting the pieces together to know what that camouflage attire might signify about the purpose of a given human's position among their people), had not only responded with calm, but with...with a promise of violence. Admittedly rather hopeless violence, since he was clearly unaware of just how impervious the Pilot's ship was, but it was a rather impressive show of bravado.

Without responding further to Master Sergeant Wells, he transmitted him back to the helicopter off of which he had been taken, and then the Pilot stopped and considered. He pulled up information gathered from the intelligence files created based on Human data transmissions, and after several minutes, he came up with a plan. Without knowing how to do so without scaring the crowd below, or risking the attacks of the ballistic weaponry on the strange flying transports the humans were surrounding him in, he decided to simply fly, risking damage, to the location listed on a three-dimensional projection of the Earth surface, roughly nine hundred miles northeast of his present location.

The pilot moved far too fast in his ship for the helicopters to respond or follow...he was out of eye sight before most the crew had realized the ship had started moving again, leaving massive shockwaves of force in the air as his ship's passing disturbed and heated the atmosphere around him. It was only through luck and exceptional skill that neither helicopter fell from the skies, crashing into the civilians below, but the Pilot never saw that, as he was already on his way to a building in the northeast quadrant of the country he was now fairly certain was the same "United States" his information files mentioned.

When he stopped over a building, which multiple transmissions had labeled the "United Nations" building, he signaled for his ship to begin translating: "Human beings. I have been informed by one of your people that you may find my collection of human samples disagreeable. I am here to communicate with your cultural leaders. Please, present them for my communication." He then launched into a slightly nicer speech than he'd used earlier, assuring whoever volunteered that he would not harm them, and that they would be returned without injury after a brief bit of intelligence gathering. And then the pilot set to work.

It was roughly 36 hours later, judging by the time humans used to measure time's slow progression, when he stopped his process of interviews. By now the ground around him was covered in unfathomable numbers of humans, many more than he expected to be willing to brave the unknown to see his ship, and many were recording with video recording devices, or transmitting their findings via small satellites perched atop their land-vehicles. After each volunteer had been brought aboard, prioritizing those he was soon able to learn were diplomats or country representatives from this United Nations facility, he had added a few notes to his data files on Humanity, and then started with someone new. It was tiring, and even though his home planet had longer day/night cycles than Earth's, he was tired, and transmitted to the people below that he would begin again approximately 27 hours, most of a night cycle for his people. And with that, ignoring the various helicopters, trucks, military vehicles, and people below, he retreated to an inner room of his ship, and readied himself for sleep. The last note he added to the Humanity data file before allowing himself the rejuvenation of unconsciousness was simple:

Note : Species classification accurate. Side note: Subclassification, Compassionate, courageous, dangerous, loyal, and potentially atypically advanced. Significant further study required

He was the first visitor to Earth, but far from the last. And within two decades, the Humans had crafted their own spacecraft capable of FTL travel, joining his people in their desire to understand and assess the worlds in their nearest reaches of space. But unlike that first pilot, whose name Humanity never learned, and whose purpose had seemed so unclear to them, the humans passed the now near-universally accepted 5 Rules of First Contact:

1. Do not threaten or harm those whom you have contacted.
2. Do not allow your contact to be public knowledge: Contact only those with the capacity to speak for their people, and allow them to decide for themselves, and respecting their decision, whether or not they wish to engage in inter-species communication.

3. Contact only the species whose technological accomplishments suggest they will be capable of spaceflight within 1-2 generations of their species' life-cycle. This is to ensure that they do not enter interplanetary travel without awareness of what is out there, but to ensure also that they do not have the burden of knowledge placed upon them before they necessarily *need* this knowledge.
4. No experimentation or study can be committed upon an intelligent being without their explicit consent and understanding.
And as the human doctors of old had pledged, finally;
5. Do no harm.